

March 17, 2003

Colorado Springs Fire Department Wildland Risk Management Office is the winner of the second annual David Ball Award for Fire and the Environment. The award, sponsored by Kidde, will be presented at the US Environmental Protection Agency's Climate Protection Awards Dinner on Earth Day, 22 April which is also the opening day of the Fifth Earth Technologies Forum in Washington DC, USA.

The Colorado Springs Fire Department Wildland Risk Management Office will receive the award for their co-ordinated programme to reduce the risk of wildfires in a 64 square mile area around Colorado Springs, with specific focus on managing the wild-land/urban interface, in order to minimise the intensity and extent of wildfires and their consequential effect on property and the environment.

The Award, which was established by Kidde plc in association with the US EPA and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), is named after David Ball, an internationally acclaimed expert on fire detection and suppression and a former Research Manager with the Kidde group, who died in July 2001. The winner will be presented with an inscribed sword that will subsequently be returned for display at the headquarters of the NFPA in Quincy, Massachusetts.

Colorado Springs Fire Department Wildland Risk Management Office, a worthy winner



For residents living in a wildland-urban interface, environment wildfires are a major threat. In the City of Colorado Springs, Colorado the interface covers 64 square miles and encompasses more than 44,000 homes. In 1999 the Colorado Springs Fire Department Wildland Risk Management Office instigated the "FireWise" programme with the specific aim of addressing

the wildfire issue in and around the city. Using risk management strategies, GIS, vegetation management and a customized message specifically adapted to local topography, fuels, homes, zoning codes and ordinances the programme's mission was to create awareness of the wildfire danger, deliver information to homeowners that will assist in reducing their risk, engage the public in taking an active role in creating a safer wildland environment and positively influence attitudes and behaviors. The Colorado Springs Fire Department's Wildland Risk Management Office performed 44,329 wildfire hazard risk evaluations on homes within the city's wildland-urban interface. Using the data collected on each individual parcel along with additional data assessment items gathered through the use of GIS, the data was processed through the WHINFOE (Wildfire Hazard Information Extraction) model and individual wildfire risk ratings were established for each home.

The ratings are on the city's website (<http://csfd.springsgov.com>) and homeowners have full access to their rating and the overall neighbourhood. Providing detailed information on the website provides an opportunity for homeowners to access the information and have detailed information that will assist in reducing their risk. Using an adult education model, property owners are encouraged to take action and become involved in "Sharing the Responsibility" for reducing their risk.

The program also benefits the local fire service by providing important wildfire mitigation information in a risk management format to homeowners. It increases the wildfire preparedness of an entire community and

provides a higher level of safety for wildland fire-fighters. Through the creation of defensible space, vegetation management and "hardened" structures, some of the hazards encountered in suppressing a wildfire are reduced.

Chairman of Judges